

News Release

Northwest School of Agriculture Alumni Association recognizes three Outstanding Alumni with Top Aggie award; Chuck Holmquist receives Distinguished Service Award

By Itolles on Friday, July 6, 2012

The Northwest School of Agriculture (NWSA) Alumni Association welcomed alumni back to the University of Minnesota, Crookston campus on Saturday, June 30, 2012, for their annual reunion. Three outstanding alumni were honored with the Top Aggie award, the highest honor awarded by Northwest School of Agriculture Alumni Association.



The award recognizes alumni who have displayed exemplary commitment and service to community, church, education, family, or in their occupational field. The Top Aggies for 2012 are Helen (Rasmussen) Tangen '41, Bemidji, Minn; Mark Chisholm '52, Gary, Minn; and Richard Olson '62, Grand Forks, N.D.

Charles "Chuck" Holmquist '52 was honored at the reunion with the Distinguished Service Award. The award is given for exemplary service by the NWSA Alumni Association Board. Holmquist was only the 14th recipient of the Distinguished Service Award since it was established in 1991.

Holmquist was a member of the alumni board several times over the years and served as its president. He is passionate about the Crookston campus and the legacy of the Northwest School. He was instrumental in bringing the Alseth NWSA Boardroom to fruition.

Helen (Rasmussen) Tangen '41 enjoyed a busy life at the Northwest School of Agriculture learning valuable lessons that would influence her both personally and professionally. Her love of music blossomed as accompanist for the choir, percussionist in the band and orchestra, and as a singer in the Glee Club and Mixed Chorus.

Growing up as an only child, Tangen says she learned to share at the Northwest School while living in a crowded dormitory and sleeping on a pull-out trundle bed. She formed lifelong friendships and attests to the rewards gained from setting and working toward academic goals. Following graduation she earned degrees from Bemidji State Teachers College and the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks, in elementary education.

For 31 years, Tangen taught school in Roseau, Thief River Falls, and Duluth, in Minnesota, and for many years, in Grand Forks, N.D. She worked with college students while teaching at the lab school at the University of Wisconsin, Superior and assisted fellow teachers in the Grand Forks Public Schools as a reading specialist.

Active in the church no matter where she was living, Tangen is currently engaged in activities with the First Lutheran Church in Bemidji, Minn. Her love for the arts has also led her to become an avid supporter of the Paul Bunyan Playhouse, a non-profit professional summer stock theater located in Bemidji. Her love of both education and the arts led her to encourage her children, grandchildren, and now, great grandchildren to develop their own educational and musical interests.

Mark Chisholm '52 gained a wealth of knowledge at the Northwest School of Agriculture to prepare him for his lifelong career in agriculture. Classes in crops, welding, and motors provided him with the expertise he needed to farm and to take on leadership roles in his community.

Chisholm's life has revolved around agriculture except for the two years he spent in the U.S. Army. He has grown certified seed for the Minnesota Crop Association for 45 years. A member of the original Red River Coop Sugar beet processing plant in Hillsboro, N.D., he was one of the first to raise sugar beets in the Gary, Minn., area.

For 46 years, Chisholm has served on the Strand Township Board in Norman County and is currently the chairman. He has been a member of the Knights of Columbus for 50 years. He has proven a dedicated leader in agriculture and in the Gary, Minn., area.

Richard Olson '62 was involved as a student at the Northwest School of Agriculture in a wide variety of activities. The opportunities in athletics, music, theater, participation and work as the co-editor of the yearbook, membership in the National Honor Society and on the Student Council, and others kept him busy and helped him develop life skills and leadership.

He earned a bachelor of science degree in math education from North Dakota State University in Fargo; a masters degree in educational administration from Montana State University in Bozeman, and his law degree from the University of North Dakota (UND) in Grand Forks.

Olson taught math at Barnesville, Minn., high school and after the military, taught at UND as an adjunct professor in the School of Law, the College of Business and Professional Administration, and the Center for Teaching and Learning. The confidence and preparation so critical to successful teaching he credits to the many opportunities that shaped his life while a student at the Northwest School.

Practicing law in North Dakota and Minnesota over the past 38 years has allowed him to serve as a city and state prosecutor, public defender, interim judge, and defense attorney while involved in many facets of criminal justice, domestic affairs matters, and business and corporate work. Olson has also provided his services pro bono to organizations including Special Olympics and the North Dakota Association for the Disabled.

In the community, Olson has served as a deacon at his church and on its board of directors. Passionate about youth and adult recreation, he was instrumental in organizing and incorporating groups for amateur softball, youth basketball, and youth baseball. He is particularly proud to have represented the Grand Forks Park District in the developing and supervising the development of an Arnold Palmer 18-hole golf course following the Grand Forks flood in 1997. Olson is currently working as the Park District's attorney in the construction and financing of the new Choice Health and Fitness Center in Grand Forks.

The NWSA was a residential high school located on the Crookston campus from 1906-68. The reunion weekend is planned by the Office of Development & Alumni Relations in cooperation with the NWSA Alumni Association board and is always held the last weekend in June.

The NWSA alumni reunion, first held in 1918, brings back alumni from the Northwest School of Agriculture, a residential high school located on what is now the University of Minnesota, Crookston campus. The NWSA graduated its first class of 8 students in 1909.

Today the University of Minnesota, Crookston delivers 26 bachelor's degree programs, 18 minors, and 36 concentrations, including 10 online degrees, in the areas of agriculture and natural resources; business; liberal arts and education; and math, science and technology. With an enrollment of 1,600 undergraduates from 25 countries and 40 states, the Crookston campus offers a supportive, close-knit atmosphere that leads to a prestigious University of Minnesota degree. "Small Campus. Big Degree." To learn more, visit www.umcrookston.edu.

In the photo, left to right, back row: Corby Kemmer, director of Development & Alumni Relations; Charles H. Casey, chancellor at the U of M, Crookston; and Richard Olson. Front row: Mark Chisholm; Charles "Chuck" Holmquist; and Helen (Rasmussen) Tangen.

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